Transcript Ep. 59: Inside the Woman Life Freedom Movement in Iran

[00:00:00] **Intro:** This is the Urban Political, the podcast on urban theory, research and activism.

[00:00:10] **Markus Kip:** Welcome to The Urban Political Podcast. Today is Monday, January 30th, 2023, and my name is Markus Kip. Today we are bringing you a gripping account from the current Women Life Freedom Movement in Iran, that was sparked by the killing of Mahsa Jina Amini in the custody of the Islamic regime's morality police, last year in September. After several weeks of uprising, the media coverage in Western countries has become more silent due, impart to the extremely repressive acts of the government in which several people have been killed, and many imprisoned. The regime has also made a deliberate attempt to control communication channels, including the control or shutdown of the internet, making it more difficult for news about events to leave the country.

The movement, however, is still very alive, as you will hear in the following, and it requires ongoing international attention, support, and mounting pressure against the regime. A few days ago, we received an audio recording from activists and Urban scholars in Tehran, who have bravely shared their absorbing experiences and analysis of the ongoing uprising.

They delve into the symbolic character of the hijab, provide historical and geographical context to the movement, and discuss the challenges they are facing in their fight for freedom and equality. These speakers have chosen to remain anonymous using aliases for their safety as they've been repeatedly subjected to repression. We are in awe of their strength and determination in the face of adversity.

A big thank you to Neda who arranged and produced this podcast and everyone else involved in making this episode possible, and whose names we cannot credit officially here. So let me hand over now and join us as we delve into the heart of the movement and explore the impact it's having on cities and its inhabitants.

[00:02:27] **Neda:** It's 3:00 PM on the 30th of September. The city just recently had a massive protest that was invaded by the police. I'm seeing a friend at a cafe who was injured at the protest 19th of September, held for the death of Mahsa Jina Amini. I just arrived back in the city, there have been changes, not because I haven't been in this city for a few years.

Things have changed since Jina's death. I can't tell if these changes are inside of me as a woman or in my relation with the city. I'm not wearing the compulsory hijab today. I have the scarf on my shoulders to pretend it has fallen off my head by accident. I'm in a hurry, but no cabs are stopping for me.

I'm thinking to myself, maybe they're not stopping for me because I'm not wearing hijab. I start walking to the cafe instead, it's about 40-minute walking. I'm a little nervous, but on my way, I pass some people who chant "Woman Life freedom". Hearing all this encouragement

makes me feel less nervous, clearly breaking the compulsory hijab law is why i am hearing the chanting, I feel supported.

I finally arrived at a Cafe, slightly late to see my friend who is waiting for me. We talked about the news and everything that has happened recently, about the day that he was close to being arrested and our friends who were arrested. We decide to start a study circle. "Urban Rage" by Mustafa Dikec has recently been translated into Farsi. We choose this book to start as the first book for study sessions.

We exchanged goodbyes and that was when I decided to walk around the city without my compulsory hijab as open as I can from now on. In the next few weeks, as I am walking, I fold my hijab into a scarf around my neck instead of having it on my shoulders one day as I am at a bakery, the baker tells me how happy he is that women are leading the protests.

He even adds some extra pastries to my shopping bag for free. The women who are breaking the compulsory hijab law, they smile at each other when they pass through the streets. Now after four months, I can say that many things have happened in all the cities of Iran and many big protests have taken place. The endurance of the Iranians is well known news around the world.

For many days these streets were seized by the protestors. Many creative works have been produced on a larger scale. Iranian protestors are still getting arrested and killed. Our study group has finished "Urban Rage", and I don't wear my scarf on my daily walks anymore.

You're hearing my words from Tehran. I choose "Neda" as my identity in this podcast, and I'm going to be your host in this episode.

I have begun this episode by sharing lived experiences of the city's exceptional times because of security reasons I keep the identity of myself and my guests anonymous, and throughout the episode, I identify each of my urban researcher guests with pseudonyms. So today, Saina, Oba and Nika, three of my friends and i will talk about urban resistance during the ongoing movement.

And it's important to mention that this discussion focuses on the Jina movement from an urban perspective in Tehran, despite the fact that it is a movement that is wider spread in most Iranian cities, including Kurdish and Baloch cities with particular characteristics.

Our talk will begin by contextualizing this uprising through a historical review. Then we discuss the geographical aspect of that, and then in the third part we talk about the materiality of this movement within the city of Tehran. At the end you'll hear also the revolutionary song composed by anonymous music students at Tehran University of Art. So, let's begin by discussing the context that lead to Jina movement. About the issue of political Islam has reason since the revolution in 1979.

How did this state come to employ Islam to oppress people and impose new laws?

[00:07:19] **Oba:** I think if we want to understand the role of political Islam in the constitution of, in the making of this current uprising, we need to go back all the way to the very early formation of the Islamic state. We need to go back to 1979 revolution.

So, if you go back, you can see how the formation and constitution of the new state, the new regime is bind up with the controlling of women bodies and basically sexuality in general. In the few days after the revolution, you can see, we have the big speech by Ayatollah Amini, the clergical, and the charismatic leader of the revolution who condemned women not having hijab in public institution and state organization. After that, a few weeks after that, I think it was the 8. March of 1979. some eight to 10,000 women came into the street to show their protest against this speech because they knew from the very beginning, if they go all the way this line, I mean, if they didn't show their protest, this sort of stomach rule became dominant, and they have to kind of follow this rule.

So, they came out, but it didn't go anywhere. We know now that it was the different fraction of revolution, not only Islamic, but also liberal nationalists and leftists who actually didn't pay attention to women issues, to women question because they thought we need to compromise women question if we want to take part in the new state. After that, within two years, we can witness that not only public institution and state organization, but also public space. In the street, you as a woman had to wear scarf, had to have a job if you want to come out of your home. Also, there are other even that shows how the constitution of the new regime is based on this suppression, I mean suppression of women's body and sexuality.

A few months after the revolution, revolutionaries actually invaded, brutally invaded bars, invaded pubs. Invaded any place who actually carried the sign of desire and sexuality. I remember, I read in the newspaper and in magazine that they put some security guard in the street to control if your dress code kind of cope with the Islamic role, otherwise you would be arrested.

And that's how this sort of Islamic state actually embodied, embodied in itself, in the street, in the public space. After that you can see this sort of state extend its ideas. It's kind of actualization within different institutions, like families, like schools. So, in schools and within family, as a girl, you have to follow these sort of Islamic codes.

[00:11:16] **Nika:** You talked about schools. I remember that my first year of, my first day at school, second year primary school, I wore a small scarf and I remember that at the school yard, i was asked to step out and stand in front of maybe around 300 students. And the school principal started shouting at me and everybody "do not show up at school like this again".

I knew that I didn't do anything wrong. But I remember, I vividly remember all those hundreds of eyes, horrified, staring at me. You know, that shows to me that, for girls whose families were not religious in particular, the state primarily relied on schools to impose, institutionalize, and even internalize hijab for young girls at a very, very young age.

[00:12:26] **Neda:** So, they had internalized even this dominance, which is a crucial point. How about you Saina, do you have a similar experience to Nika's?

[00:12:36] **Saina:** You talked about your experience, which was in 1980s. Yeah. I was born in 1990s, and I had absolutely a different experience.

When I was born at that time, this idea of hijab and all the rules related to that was developed, established, even internalized. So, it was the norm of the society in my eyes. I thought, okay, it was always like this, and it's going to be like this from now on. I didn't have an idea of a society which was not like this, so this was not only the norm, but also, I would like to say that the government, the regime, was able to role play actually. After a few years the regime learned that it cannot be very brutal, the way it wants to have control on women's bodies. So, they learned the play actually, and they knew that they have to hide behind a facet so that it's not very extreme or brutal.

So, it never became a big concern in my eyes when I was a kid or when I was a teenager. But now, when I think of that time, I kind of feel that, okay, this was downplayed. And the whole idea was that hijab is not a very important concern and you kind of should be ashamed of yourself if you have this concern that are much more important things that you should care about. And hijab is like not a big deal. But now I think the mask is removed and we can see that this was a big concern, and we need to fight for that.

[00:14:54] **Neda:** Yes, for years some people were persuaded there are too many priorities such as economic inequality that women should protest alongside men. Thank you, Saina, for mentioning.

So as mentioned in Iran after 1979, women were disciplined and confined in the urban space through the mandatory hijab and even resurrections on the choice of colour and homogenization of appearance. This homogenization means making women invisible in public space. This control over the body from the beginning of the 1979 revolution.

Based frequent protests by women and activist researcher feminists, despite all the risks. With the government's insistence on homogenization visibility in urban space, found a contradictory meaning. While being visible in urban space, promotes public security for women in Iran, it comes to mean a lack of security and being under the authority of others.

This control is the same tool that Foucault refers to in the architecture of panopticon Prisons. In this situation Jina is subject to this control, since the authority disapproves of the hijab she wears. She Came to Tehran to visit. The morality police arrested her, which resulted in her death. To protest Jina's death in a society accumulated by wider spread social and class inequalities.

That has left behind the revolts of 2017 and 2019, a nationwide uprising began in Iran, which has wide dimensions. Jina's movement like the [unintelligible] story is a point in space that contains all other matters. Therefore, we discussed the historical context in which the current movement started. What do you think of the movement, geographical scope, depending on how they contributed to the revolution, the rising of Jina changed the political geography of Iranian cities?

How do you see this?

[00:17:10] **Oba:** I'm glad you brought up this topic, the question of geographic movement. I wish to claim that "Women Life Freedom" movement has gone beyond this well-established boundaries, class, ethnic, and gender boundaries. To explain this, I would like to have a very

short review of the three generation of protest in Iran. 1990s a movement, 2009 green movement and 2019 movement to show how the current uprising, I mean Jina Uprising has changed the various sphere of the movement.

In the first generation of movement in Iran in 1990s, we had this sort of peripheral, rebellious movement. So, people who couldn't find any place within the urban centre who had to find place in the periphery, in the marginalized space of big cities, actually came out because, I think it was because of the rise of the transportation price.

So, they came out and they actually called for more economic policies. So, it would be fair to call this first generation as a marginalized peripheral protest. So, if we continue and go to 2009, which is quite famous as a green movement, it was a political uprising. You know, people actually, it was because of the election.

They thought the election has been stolen, so they came out in a big mass, and they chanted for political freedom, the right to vote, the right to have your own representation. So, it was kind of a middle-class protest, it was bind up within the city centre, big city of Iran, like Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan.

So, there were not any sign of protests in the periphery at 2009 green movement. So, let's go to 2019 when the protest began in the, again, small city, satellite city around big cities. Those people were who, kind of deported from the city centre because of the economic difficulties. So, it is fair to call them a poor middle class.

But the current movement, I mean the Jina movement kind of go beyond all these boundaries. So, we witness protests in the periphery. Also, in the city centre. We can see some places like poor neighbourhoods and also rich neighbourhoods. We can see people in the Kurdish area, in the Arab area, in the Baluch, in [unintelligible].

Different ethnicity in Europe came out of their home and showed their protests. Even different ages. It's quite famous that it belongs to young generation, but you can see also not very young. I mean, those who are in their thirties or forties also came into the street.

So, I think the geography of this movement kind of go beyond all those famous patterns and it was a condensation of all suppressed ones. People who have been suppressed for two or three decades. So, the geography of current movement has been changed. I believe, we are witnessing the emergence of the new geography of urban movement in Europe.

So, this Jina movement, Jina revolutionary uprising is the condensation of all dissatisfaction of various strata of the society which have been accumulated over the four decades, beginning from the establishment of Islamic regime.

[00:22:02] **Neda:** In addition to how the geography of the cities has changed as a consequence of their involvement in the protests, we have also observed changes in the architecture and urban planning over the recent years, Nika what is your opinion on this?

[00:22:22] **Nika:** Let's talk about Tehran. In the last movements that all of us talking about. People in Tehran mainly turn to two main streets of Tehran for protesting against the state. These two main streets were actually the main two axis of the city, especially the east west

axis, the Enqelab Street, which by the way means "revolution street", especially provides access to three main universities as well, which are main players in Iranian political landscape. So, with that new geography of the urban protest, the states plan to change these streets. So around that time they started to implement a bus rapid transit system along these two streets. Valiasr street and Enqelab street.

These are public infrastructure and provide public benefits for people effectively. But then in the times of political tensions, like right now, these bus lines are used for the movement, fast movement of the security services, plain clothes, socks and armoured vehicles to quell the protest very effectively and rapidly.

Also, we have another place along this street, which is Valiasr Juncture, which is a very iconic and very crowded place. The change that the state made in this juncture was that it was close to pedestrians, ostensibly for improving the traffic jam condition. But then with this changes, you see that the revolutionist street is being closed and inaccessible for the revolutionaries.

So, you see that, what we see here is that public infrastructure became a component of the security operators of the state and urban planning as a mechanism at the service of a totalitarian estate. That's all I can say.

[00:25:16] **Oba:** Can I add one thing to what Nika said?

[00:25:20] **Neda:** Of course, please.

[00:25:22] **Oba:** You know there's another example of the role of these urban design in how to control and surveillance urban dwellers.

There is a, we have squares. I mean, squares in Europe has very historical role in gathering people together. In old days, it was a place of information circulation and everything. But new days, it was some sort of, it kind of lost its historical role cause of the prevalence of cars over pedestrian.

Even in this context the urban development department, I mean those public institutions, have changed the design and the architecture of this square. This square was kind of, the old design was like, you could kind of roundabout the square. So, when you could do this, it actually keeps some sort of these roles that I mentioned.

But they actually closed the circle of these urban squares. So, the car comes roundabout. You have to just U-turn and continue your path. So, when you actually change this function, those squares, which historically has the reputation of gathering people in the moment of protest and uprising, has lost their function, has lost this sign of protest.

So, in all the squares. I mean, you can't see the gathering of people in this Jina uprising. So that's another example of how urban design can control the uprising, the gathering of people in the public space.

[00:27:30] **Neda:** Most of this urban design change took place after the green movement, I think.

[00:27:36] **Oba:** Yeah, I think so. I mean after 2009 they tried to change the urban design.

[00:27:41] **Neda:** Indeed, they changed the city's architecture to suppress future protests and possible uprisings.

[00:27:50] **Saina:** What was explained, makes so much sense to me as well, that urban planning, urban management serves the needs and the priorities of the regime.

For me it was very much in the idea of smart cities. It's something very fashionable these days in the last few decades, maybe. Everyone in urban planning faculties and in that academic sphere are talking about smart cities. It looks very cool to work on that, to read about this, to research on this issue.

But there are absolutely many concerns about the idea of smart city that people are also talking about worldwide. And it's almost about the privacy of people, but it's just about concerns and some ethical concerns and if they really want to share our information with some other people or not.

But for us, in this very period in the last few months, it was not about ethical concerns or things like that. It was much more beyond concern, and it was the matter of life. How the smart city was actually a very good tool to control the whole movement and the people who were against the government.

When they were not there, they were there, and they were watching us. Wherever you are, they're like, okay I'm also there and I'm watching you. And a very obvious example is the cameras, which are all over the city. And they are being developed everywhere. They have this facial recognition system.

They can identify and recognize you. They can track the individuals and maybe arrest them, imprison them. This is how they are working and how they are helping the government to control us. Another very stupid example of this smart city is the text messages that we get for not wearing the hijab in our cars.

You're driving and you have your scarf for a few minutes even, and then very soon you get a text message. With this content that, we saw that you didn't have this scarf. Next time you're not having this scarf, it's going to be a big deal for you. Warning. And the next time it's going to be a severe problem.

They say that, okay, this was a crime. You repeated that and this is the crime. So everywhere we are under control, and we are being watched. This is how smart cities changed its definition for me in the last two, three months.

[00:31:13] **Neda:** Thank you Saina for pointing out the suppression function of the smart city. In this sense, there are also online tools that are used to track down demonstrators.

[00:31:26] **Saina:** Absolutely. Absolutely it is. For example, we have this "Snapp" application, which is kind of the Iranian Uber, and has become very popular lately, in the last few years. Especially in the period of the pandemic, we all have been used to using this as something in our everyday life. And it's something very convenient and nothing very strange.

We are going from one part of city to another part of the city. And it's not important, but we are sharing a lot of information and the idea of smart cities is based on gathering data and what are they going to do with this big data gathered? They know where we go. They know my routes, my very everyday routes, and if I do anything wrong, they have access to all the places that I go and I can be imprisoned very easily. And this is the case which is happening. It's no more a theory or a concern. It's the reality of our life in the last few months. The people are imprisoned and, when they talk to them, I don't know.

[00:32:44] **Oba:** Interrogation.

[00:32:45] **Saina:** Yeah. They show the routes they have been in. Why were you in that place in that time? They were a protest there at this time of the year. What were you doing there? This is the crime very easily.

[00:33:05] **Neda:** Okay. Let's talk about urban resistance.

Is there a disruption in top down dictated urban life?

Is there a new way of living in cities that is being unfolded at the grassroots level, particularly for women?

[00:33:24] **Nika:** I would like to compare the different conditions that we have. Before the murder of Mahsa Amini and after the murder of Mahsa Amini. I'm guessing that two different conceptualizations of politics can help us explain these differences.

Before the murder of Mahsa Amini, I think Asaf Bayat's take on "Street politics" explains the dominant form of resistance at the micro level of everyday life. He talks about the incremental and quiet encroachment of the marginalized like street vendors and squatters. Well for women, they were doing the same thing.

They pushed the threshold of tolerated hijab by the state bit by bit over the past four decades. But these were mostly mundane and covered resistance rather than deliberate political acts. But after Mahsa Amini's murder, I think we experienced what Rancière sees as politics. From his point of view imposing hijab in public spaces was a particular social order which became a natural given basis for governments for the last four decades. In this order a woman without hijab had no place. She was not supposed to be seen, not supposed to be served, or even imagined. For Rancière politics involves challenging and disrupting this order of domination by making visible what had no business being seen.

So, when women took off their hijab, it was a Rancièrian moment, which was an emancipatory change, I think.

[00:35:15] **Neda:** So, removing the mandatory hijab by women is a collective political movement to emancipatory change.

[00:35:23] **Nika:** To explain that, maybe a good example is Havel's book "The Power of the Powerless". Because we both are dealing with totalitarian regimes.

Like his case, in Iran, most women have hijab, not because they believe in it or because everyone does it, or because that it is the way it had to be. They do it because they want to

get on with their lives. If they were to refuse, they could have been sent to jail or beaten up even to death.

As the case of Mahsa Amini shows us. So therefore, hijab is an embodied sign with a very definite message. It conveys how the power, and the will of the state are exercised through the gendered bodies. Hijab became an instrument for the state's automatic operation of the power. But then how else?

Ask us, let us imagine that one day everybody drops these signs. This is what has happened exactly after the murder of Mahsa Amini. Many women not only took off their hijab, then burned it down in many different performative ways. These performances, in fact, exposed the lies behind that image of the natural order.

And along with it disintegrated the image of an omnipotent state.

[00:37:00] **Saina:** Very interesting. I really get emotional, how you translated what is happening in the street with the idea of Havel in the book of "The Power of the Powerless". It was really nice. I could feel it really, because I feel like this is exactly what is happening.

We are not tolerating those signs anymore. We kind of are saying, no it's not going to be like this anymore. For example, I'm not wearing the hijab because I want to be myself just the way I am. I don't believe in that, and I'm not going to lie anymore. I'm not wearing that. And the result is that we are facing a very new landscape of Iranian cities, especially in the Capital, Tehran.

And this is very new to me because I was not in those years before the Islamic Revolution, and I have never seen the cities like this. So, it's totally a very new face, which is cool. It's not just cool, it's very diverse and it's representing the diversity and the way that many people think.

So, what we have experienced is that your lifestyle is not acceptable, and you need to hide this. But now it has changed, and we want to show our lifestyle. Before that it was in our private spaces. At home, you could live the way you want, but when you come out in the public space, you should be the way that is acceptable from the regime.

But now it's like this, that I say, no. I want public space to be the way that I want. I will not obey those rules anymore. And this is how we are building a new city maybe, which is much more connected to my identity. I don't feel like an alien in the city anymore, but I really used to feel like an alien.

I came out of the door of my apartment, and everything was like, why? Why are they shouting this much of propaganda and this much of, I don't know, things that do not make sense to me? They were saying that otherness is not accepted, and you should be just the way we say. And now people are resisting this, and they are showing no, we live in another way, and that's fine. And it should be.

[00:40:05] **Oba:** I think from what Nika and Saina said, we can bring up a new idea about the nature of this resistance, I think. Now I would like to focus on the life part of the "Woman life Freedom" slogan of this uprising, because we already talked about the women part. We

already talked about the freedom. But I think the life part of this slogan is the very essential nature of this uprising.

Why? Because I think these people, I mean revolutionary subject of this uprising is quite different from those three past generations, which I talked about in the in the previous section. Let me explain it. We might think, or basically we used to think after revolution, after resistant politics, resistant action as a, some sort of discontinuity of life.

You know, you stop having ordinary life, you go to street and protest. I think this current uprising, Jina uprising, it has nothing to do with those sorts of thing. It was actually the very ordinary and everyday life of people, you know? They, it wasn't discontinuity to the life, it was the continuity of the life.

It was because as a revolutionary subject. You this time, didn't go into the streets because you want something, you want economic needs, you want, political freedom. You want those things, but this time you actually want your own way of being. So, what was in struggle was the way you are, the very being of yourself was at the stake.

So, people came out to show what we are. That's exactly where the nature of performativity of this uprising is very important. Notice everyone has seen the image of the protest. People went on a street, go up the object, show their scarf, put their scarf on the stick, and singing revolutionary song.

So, I think it was some sort of life revolution people actually want to regain to inappropriate their life. Not only their economic needs, not only their political freedom, but also the way they want to be. That's why the idea of Rancière became very important. How when he talks about demonstration, they talk about what used to be invisible, must be visible. If it wants to be political.

That's exactly what happened in Iran. People actually want to demonstrate. People actually want to show who they are. That's why they came into the street and show those, sort of performance. And they actually put picture from their action in their social medias, in their Twitter, in their Instagram accounts. Because they want to show it not only to act it, not only to live it, they wanted to demonstrate who they are.

That's actually a thing. The differences between this current uprising compared to those previous phases of revolutionary uprisings.

[00:43:57] **Neda:** How do the physical urban space and digital space interface together?

[00:44:02] **Oba:** Yeah, I mean that's the whole point. At the previous times, social media didn't play a very important role because it wasn't advanced that much, at least in Europe.

But this time, we have some sort of convergence between virtual space and actual space. You go to actual space, show your protest. And then this simulates your picture in the social media so everyone in the world can see who you are. That's the kind of the convergence of virtual and actual in the embodiment of everyday life of Iranian revolutionary protest.

[00:44:46] **Nika:** That's interesting, Oba talked about the convergence between actual and virtual aspects of the protest. I would like to talk about a little bit more about the actual

aspect of the protest. But this time these protests were scattered around the city, at least in Tehran, in different neighbourhoods we had scattered protests. And in these protests, it was very interesting that the constellation of people protestors, the street itself, urban infrastructure, urban furniture, building fronts, walls, windows, all of them came together. And then we have protests that are shaped or appeared or disappear and reappear in different locations in different times.

I would like to talk about one specific object here, which played an important role, I think. And that was trash bins when we were in the streets for a protest. When we say that a trash bin is on fire, that was a signal for us. That means that the protest is going to start, and we should go to that direction.

And it was like a bright object, as you like, in assemblage thinking, which draws on every people object and everything towards itself and shape and assemblage of protest. And this trash bins played different roles. We had lots of photos of young women going up to these trash bins and shouting and singing, sign and leading their protests.

So that was a performative aspect of these trash bins. And also, that trash bin actually being burned means that it blocked the street, so the security forces could not reach to the protestors or have trouble in doing that. That's interesting as well because the first person that was executed in this current uprising, Mohsen Shekari, was accused of blocking a street with these trash bins and even Ali Amini called setting up trash bins a betrayal to the country.

So, this remind me of the assemblage theory and assemblage thinking that, consider how this assemblage is a happenstance of people, objects, discourses, slogans, everything, shape assemblages of protests in Tehran. And that was an interesting experience for me.

[00:48:05] **Saina:** As you were talking about trash bins and their new meaning. It reminded me of a scene related to the very first days of protests in Tehran. I'm trying to describe an organic social act in which trash bin took the leading role. It was very beautiful, and it really meant so much to me. Let me describe it more detailed. Valiasr Street, one of the most important and iconic streets of the Capitol, was blocked by a trash bin.

The trash bin was on fire, absolutely to defend against tear gas. And there was a moment, a very special moment that people could get together, and they improvised a performance around that trash bin on fire. Women started walking around the fire. They made a circle together and started singing and chanting their demands.

It was like a very ancient ritual, it was really legendary. It didn't last more than a few minutes, but I think it was very, very powerful in terms of representing the soul of "Woman Life Freedom" movement. It had all the elements. It had life, women and freedom and the beauty of liberty inside that. It was very emotional for me, and I felt like, we are trying to get the city back and I felt like I belong to this city, I belong to this community. It is also mine.

Before this, it was like that, that we all accepted that public space is the territory of government and we have to have our life, our personal life in our private spaces. But now

this is changing, and we are trying to get the city back, as I said, and we are trying to give new meaning to very normal things of our everyday life. Like trash bins, as Nika said.

[00:50:31] **Oba:** Can I add one thing?

[00:50:33] **Neda:** Sure, please.

[00:50:36] **Oba:** Based on what Nika and Saina said, we now can have this, sort of conclusion that, what came out of this revolutionary uprising is the change, the transformation of our relation, citizens relation to streets. I mean, my own relation with the street has been changed.

From then on, I think it's my streets. I walk with more confidence. I kind of speak with the street, with the train. I kind of feel, okay, cars you have to stop. It's my priority to cross the street. And then you, because it's you, it's different. People actually has been afraid of the street.

They think that's scary, I'm not, crossing. Also, the experience of girls, I think has been changed. The relation to streets changes, if you ask Nika and Saina about the sexual assault, I think the pattern is changed. Do you think so?

[00:51:48] **Saina:** I do believe that it has changed. And it's obvious, I can see that, I can track that. People are much more sensitive about what they say, how they react. I hear that much more often that people say, okay, this was not sexually correct, or this was not politically correct. But this was not a matter before this. But now people are really sensitive.

They care what they say, how they react, so that it has no judgment, which is related to sexuality or stuff like this. And I love this change. I think this is one of the benefits of this movement that nothing can change. This is something sustainable, this change.

[00:52:36] **Nika:** I think so because of all this precious, we have faced with urban alienation over the years, but the movement with this bottom-top changes made a revolution.

[00:52:51] **Neda:** So, in this episode of the Urban Political Podcast, we discussed that this outburst resulted from 43 years of gender discrimination and economic, social, and political exploitation of different Iranian groups. Through implementing the regimes interpretation of Islamic law. We discussed, Jina's movement has been unprecedented, identified even as a revolution, as it is a battle to make out progressive alternatives.

Started in a small Kurdish city, not in Tehran. And then [...] Was shouted in the streets of Persian central cities, in Tabriz, Turkish city, and in the most distant cities of centre in Baluchistan. And how materiality, the body, gender, sexual orientation came to the core of the revolution discussion in this part of the world, we discussed how this uprising has repositioned the political geography of Iran, how the city is integrating Iranians in order to bring about radical political change of the slogan of "Woman Life Freedom" is being materialized in these streets.

Also, we shared our exercise of resistance as citizens and some grassroots activities in the last couple of months. Let me ask my friends one last question as a conclusion or even their vision for the future of this rebellion for freedom.

Oba, please.

[00:54:44] **Oba:** I would like to talk about the relation between Iran and West. What strikes me, was like when the Western gaze saw the picture of Iranian revolution, I got this feeling that Western would say, wow, Iranian or Middle Eastern girls are so brave, so avant-garde, so progressive, as if their previous image of Iranian or Middle Eastern girl was those stereotyped that okay, those who are stuck in their houses doing some daily routine home walks. I got the feeling that how could it be some sort of reverse Orientalism. That you now, because of the social media, because of Iranian revolutionary image has gone global, now you faced with the new image of middle Eastern girls.

So, I began thinking why it happened and I reached the conclusion that for some good decades, Iranian relation with the Western journals, medias, academics has been blocked. Because you know, we kind of know about geopolitical stuff, Iranian Western international relations. So, we didn't have those sorts of transmission of information, students, conference.

I hope this is the beginning of the new relation between Iran and West. So Iranian context, Iranian history can contribute to the urban studies, urban literature because we have the unique history. Every place has its own unique history. But Iranian has experienced some sort of political Islam.

Which kind of changed the atmosphere of urban space. And also, urban politics. So, it could contribute to enrich the urban literature. And also, urban literature, urban global literature can contribute to the way we understand, we reflect on ourself. The universal concept of urban politics could also change our mindset, could change the way we understand, the way we realize what we are.

So that's my imagination for the future. The kind of interconnection between Iranian context, historical context, and western literature.

[00:57:49] **Nika:** Can I add that the same thing is correct about postcolonial feminist studies and feminist studies of the global south. So, I think now it's the time to rethink this literature in the light of this women life freedom movement.

[00:58:06] **Saina:** I think this was the most difficult question of this talk. Because I think the last few months has been very intense and whenever I talk about what has happened lately. I'm like, wow, how much, how many things, how many events, how many, yeah, that's too much. And adding something to that is always very, very difficult because whenever I talk about this, I feel like, okay, I've missed that. I've missed this one as well. This one was more important. But anyhow, I want you to know that we are talking in this context, which is really, really intense. What was really inspiring, I would say for me, in the last few months was this idea that we care about each other. What I mean is that we were all chanting woman, life, freedom.

We all think that we know what freedom is, but when you really chanted, you start rethinking about it and finding the new meaning of that. And in this new meaning, what was

really interesting for me is that we are finding out how collective this idea of freedom is. And I cannot be free. I cannot be free until other people are also free.

And this liberty, this idea of freedom is a collective fight that we are all trying for that. For example, if they have something in mind in Kurdistan, which maybe does not make sense to me, but now I understand that until they are not free, I'm also not free. And their problem is also my problem.

And we can spread that worldwide and we are all connected to each other if we really want to get to this idea of freedom.

[01:00:12] **Neda:** Exactly Saina, thank you. I would also like to thank Nika and Oba. It was a fantastic talk. And last but not least, we would like to thank Urban Political Podcast for giving us their platform as a safe and secure space and for being supportive and understanding along the way.

[Liberty Song playing]